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# The MCA Advisor

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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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## From the Editor

Numismatics is faced with something of a paradox. On the one hand, judging from the frequency of multi-million dollar auctions, collectors are buying as never before. The advent of Registry Sets has fermented a competition for quality that would appear to have no economic bounds.

This is the one hand. On the other hand, we see the Smithsonian closing its exhibits entirely (or merely in large part if public protests succeed in salvaging something). We see the venerable Musée des Monnaies on the verge of closing. We see our national organizations, the ANA and the ANS, having to rattle their tin cups in order to make ends meet.

How is it that we hobbyists are spending millions on our collections and virtually nothing on the educational institutions that custode our heritage? We reject the contention that numismatists are greedy or miserly by nature. Some are to be sure, but the great majority falls in a normal range between thrift and generosity.

What is missing, in our opinion, is a medium for the message. Most collectors are unaware of the plight of our institutions. We need collectors who are not only aware but, more important, who are willing to ask their

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peers to open their wallets in their own long-term interest.

Medal collectors are, by definition among the most thoughtful members of the hobby. We all know people who are active in the ANA and ANS. Why not call one of them and ask how you can help? Maintaining our traditions is well worthy of your time and treasure.

### **An Unusual Piece**

(by John W. Adams)

In the last Ponterio sale (9/11/2004, lot #108 stood out. The lot featured the bust of an older George III as used on the Indian peace medals dated 1814. This one-sided work of art, framed under glass, was executed in wax with a silvered surface. The piece fetched a hammer price of \$2700.

Though similar to the standard obverse of the 1814 medal, lot 108 is a new (i.e. unreported) die. The fact that it exhibits a die break from the rim at K5 into the field suggests to us that this was the first obverse for what became a very popular medal and that the wax impression was taken so as to provide a prototype for gaining approval of the design. Wax was used as a planchet for fear of breakage if a harder substance were employed.

The mystery is the silvered surface. Normal plating techniques would have melted the wax. Perhaps a silver paint was applied but, judging by the photo, there are no tell tale brush strokes. Dick Johnson, our resident encyclopedia, suggests that the silver was deposited electrically after the wax surface was coated with a conductive substance. Given the British mastery of electroforming, this explanation makes good sense. Readers are encouraged to tender other theories. Pieces like lot #108 provide an opportunity to expand our

understanding of how and why medals are made.

### **Questions and Answers**

A reader asks: "How rare is Jamieson 36 and to what Indians was it awarded?" We asked Warren Baker to handle this one, Warren being the leading authority on Canadiana in all its forms. Not one for half measures, he came up with the following eloquent and definitive response.

### **Setting the Record Right**

(by Warren Baker)

The so-called Indian treaty medal (Jam. Fig. 36) has been the subject of confusion for many years. The topic can almost not be discussed without introducing the two other medals associated with the new Canadian government's treaties with the Indians of the North West. Both Morin (1915) and Jamieson (1936) claimed that the small Victoria medal was the first intended for the Indian Chiefs who had negotiated Treaty No. 1 and 2 with the Canadian Government, but this is apparently not the case. In the fall of 1870 the Indians of Manitoba applied to enter a treaty with the government. This came on the heels of the new Confederation's acquisition of the Northwest Territories and Rupertsland from the Hudson's Bay Company at a cost of three hundred thousand pounds, one of the results of which was the first Riel Rebellion in early 1870.

Fifty of these small medals were ordered from Wyon of which thirty were intended for the Indians of Manitoba. Another twenty medals were sent to British Columbia, two of which were sold to Ministers of the Crown according to a Memorandum from Duncan Campbell Scott of the Department of Indian Affairs sent to L. A. Renaud on May 10th, 1930. Of the eighteen medals for British Columbia, six were returned to the Department of Indian Affairs on

the closing of the Indian Commissioner's Office at Victoria. Though the thirty small medals destined for Manitoba may have been intended for the Treaty 1 and 2 Indians, there is no indication that any such presentation occurred. The Indian Affairs Report for 1872 details the goods given to the Treaty 1 and 2 Indians, but there is no mention of the Wyon or any other medal. The Report for 1873 does cite the twenty Wyon medals purchased for British Columbia and Manitoba on the authority of Sir John Rose, Canadian Agent-General in London. The cost of those for British Columbia was \$254.48; the thirty medals for the Manitoba Indians cost \$381.72 for a total average cost of \$12.73 each.

The memorandum further confirms that the small Wyon medals were never given out for the early treaties: *These medals were considered too small and inappropriate in design for treaty medals and so were replaced by large silver plated medals with Queen Victoria's head and the inscription "Dominion of Canada Chiefs medal 1872" on the obverse side and on the reverse Britannia and four allegorical figures representing the industries and the inscription "Indians of the Northwest Territories" and "Juventas et Patrius Vigor Canada Instaurata 1867".* The reference of course is to the large electrotype produced by Robert Hendery (Jam. Fig. 37). A letter in my possession from William Spragge, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, dated Ottawa, 30 July, 1872, to explorer, Robert Bell in Thunder Bay states: *In regard to the medals there is much in what you remark - and I should have preferred them being of solid silver coin had it occasioned them being of much smaller size - but Mr. Simpson (Indian Comm.) who was to distribute them was desirous that the design of the Confederation medal which is very handsome should be that which these should follow and in his requisition he insisted "Electroplate" - They are very heavily silver plated and the design is well pursued in the*

*execution of them. These explanations are of course insufficient and private but a suitable reply to your kind note was del'd to you. Should any more be required I should be disposed to recommend smaller medals of superior material.* This is the first mention of a treaty medal to my knowledge.

Finally, in 1875 the government determined on a medal that would prove satisfactory. A letter addressed from the Department of the Interior, dated March 17, 1875 to Edward Jenkins, Agent General of Canada in London fully explains the matter.

*Sir:*

I have the honor to state that the Minister of the Interior is desirous to obtain through your kind intervention a supply of silver medals commemorative of the treaties concluded within the last few years or which may be concluded hereafter with the Indians in the North West Territories.

2. The medals are intended to be given to the Chiefs of the Indian tribes with whom the treaties are made and to be in some sort significant of the event.
3. It is proposed that the medals should be of pure silver of the size of the accompanying drawing and of the ordinary thickness of a medal of that circumference.
4. The obverse of the medal to contain the Queens head with the usual legend "Victoria Regina".
5. The drawing herewith is intended to indicate the subject for the reverse of the medal. It represents an Indian in full dress shaking hands with an officer in civil uniform of the second class with prairie in the background and a partially buried tomahawk in the foreground.

6. It will be left to the artist to whom the Execution of the medal is entrusted to modify or alter the accompanying design as he may think necessary.
7. It might possibly be well to introduce the setting sun as an indication of the march of Empire westward, some wigwams also might be shewn in the distance.
8. It should be arranged that the medal might be worn around the neck with a ribbon.
9. As the medal is to serve for several treaties made in different years, it will be necessary to omit the No. of the treaty and the last 2 cyphers of the date at the base of the reverse. These figures must be engraved here.
10. One hundred and fifty will be required and it is important that they should be in the hands of the Minister if possible early in the month of June.
11. Knowing that you are already in correspondence with the distinguished medalists Messrs J.S. & A.B. Wyon the Minister has no hesitation in entrusting the execution of the medal to your care.
12. Will you have the kindness to report full information to the Minister at what date he may expect the medals to reach him and what will be the probable cost including the die.

This is the very attractive medal catalogued by Jamieson and illustrated as his Figure 38. These medals replaced the Hendery electrotype given for Treaties 1 and 2, and the Queen Victoria medal was given right up to 1899 when Treaty No. 8 was signed in 1899.

The small silver Wyon medals were stock medals, and those ordered by Rose were no doubt intended at first to serve as Treaty medals, but authorities, realizing the general

insignificance of the medal decided against them. At least one of the British Columbia medals is recorded as having been presented as a bravery award. In a pamphlet titled Vancouver Island and its missions. 1874-1900. Reminiscences of the Rev. A. J. Brabant, a medal is illustrated with the reverse engraved TO/MA-HA-CLOW/CHIEF OF THE HESQUILITS/FOR BRAVERY & SUBSEQUENT/KINDNESS IN RESCUING/THE CAPTAIN AND CREW/FROM THE WRECK OF THE BARK EDWIN/DECR. 1874. The medal, it was claimed, was given by the Dominion Government.

However, these stock medals were used for other purposes, and not only in a Canadian context. A friend tells me of one that he saw awarded by a British agricultural society. Well known British dealer Chris Eimer also considers it to be a stock medal, not exclusively Canadian in his opinion. The examples that Chris has seen have all been unawarded, yet worn. It would be of interest to learn of other presentation medals, whether to Indians or not. In the meantime, the Wyon stock medal, the obverse of which had been previously used for another medal, can not be claimed as a Treaty medal. Some may well have been given as gifts to Indians on other occasions, but their status as Treaty medals has hopefully been clarified.

## **Diplomatic Medal**

(by John W. Adams)

In 1789, Thomas Jefferson returned to the United States, having served three years as ambassador to France. While in Paris, he supervised the design and procurement of the seven Comitia Americana medals left unfinished by Benjamin Franklin and David Humphreys.

In 1790, Jefferson became George Washington's Secretary of State. One of his first acts in that capacity was to commission the

Diplomatic Medal, a distinction to be awarded to foreign diplomats who had been helpful to our fledgling nation. Two gold medals were presented but neither survives. As few as six and as many as nine specimens were struck in bronze. Three of these can be traced today, of which one is in an institutions and one is Lot 202 in the Ford V Sale held on October 12.

John Ford not only owned one of the two collectable specimens; he also owned no less than eight lead splashers of various obverse and reverse designs. The struck medal sold for an “all in“ price of \$37,375; the splashers ranged from \$5000 to \$16,000.

True rarities, such as the Diplomatic Medal, tend to be under priced because there is not enough supply of them to promote. This said, a population of two in collectors’ hands fits the definition of “non-collectable” and a price of \$37,375 is not for everyone even if they were available by the roll.

Fortunately, the U.S. Mint took two splashers and, in 1876, made a set of copy dies. Examples from these dies are eminently collectable and at a three-figure price. The owners of these pieces can also savor the rich history of the Diplomatic Medal, much of which remains to be told.

### **Finally, Some Ford Medals!**

Ford V Gives Medal Collectors Something To Cheer About (by John Kraljevich)

Ford’s Washingtoniana collection notwithstanding, the most recent installment of the Ford sales by Stack’s was the first chance collectors got a good glimpse of the range and depth of the Ford medal collection. John has always championed medals for their history, rarity, and under appreciated nature (like most of what he collected), and the entire medal collecting community owes him a debt of gratitude for his long-time interest and the fantastic cabinet he managed to painstakingly

assemble, beginning with pieces chosen from the estate of Henry Chapman.

Sold in New York on Columbus Day, October 12, perhaps it was especially appropriate for the Ford Naval medals to begin the medallic feast (though some might argue Indian peace medals would have been a good choice on Columbus Day too, but we need not get into politics here). After an interesting selection of early American coins were sold, lots of medals with pictures of boats on them floated onto the auctioneer’s podium. Up first: the Ford *collection* of 1787 Washington and Columbia medals. Most medal collections lack a single specimen, the most advanced have one, but no one has ever had 4 before! Even cabinets like Garrett and Wilson couldn’t rival Mr. Ford in this department. And the medals were, individually, quite impressive too: a nice VFish silver piece, a damn-near gem copper, and two pewters, one Unc and the other not. Ye who said medal collecting is dying, take heart: the collection remained intact, with each sold to a winning bidder who is a relative newcomer. The ready-made collection required some sophistication to appreciate the medals’ importance and a ready check for a bit over \$60,000. Not bad, when the world record price for a *Franklin half dollar* is nearly \$10,000 more!

Continuing the naval theme, the Ford V sale included the U.S. Mint series called “NA” by Julian. Though a product of Paris, a silver original John Paul Jones began things. Toned and attractive, the piece sold for a reasonable \$13,000 hammer bid. Your correspondent is curious to see whether the Adams-Bentley census (the ABC?) will corroborate Mr. Hodder’s estimate of “there may be five or six of these known,” a phrase that seems to beg a predicate along the lines of “but there might also be twice that number.” Real research, rather than speculation, will answer the question.

The medals of the War of 1812 shone brightly, though color me stunned that the unique-in-private-hands Preble medal, with its gorgeous toning and storied history, brought only a \$12,000 bid. Asked about the modest price later, the cataloguer, with typical British understatement, suggested a reason: “it’s hollow.” Hollow, indeed, but beautiful and incredibly rare as well. A well-known dealer bought the piece for his collection. A mysterious phone bidder stepped up to purchase the lightly polished silver Bainbridge *Constitution vs. Java* medal for \$22,000, with an employee of the auction house thrusting skyward with such force on each bid that the heavens threatened to crash down upon the proceedings. Later in the sale, a well-known New York dealer seemed to run the same phone representative up for the sheer joy of seeing his decidedly unusual bidding style. He did not disappoint. The phone bidder also won the positively gorgeous Blakely medal in silver at a very strong final bid of \$32,500. But his greatest challenge lay ahead.

That challenge manifested itself in a six-figure round hunk of gold. The unique gold medal presented by the Congress to Captain Robert Henley had been acquired by Mr. Ford in 1978 after showing up in the same upstate New York region where the medal had been earned: Plattsburgh, along the banks of Lake Champlain. On September 11, 1814, Henley captained the *U.S.S. Eagle* to victory. In order to achieve victory on October 12, 2004, the phone bidder pursued this incredible gold medal from an opening bid of \$11,000 past \$20,000, upwards to \$30,000, then to \$50,000 and beyond, while his competitor, a well-known New York dealer, giggled at the enormous sum he was bidding for the piece (and, ostensibly, his competitors’ remarkably enthusiastic and athletic gesticulations). To \$60,000 and \$70,000, upwards, onwards, excelsior! to a final hammer bid of \$90,000,

over \$100,000 with the buyer’s fee, and a new world record for any American naval medal sold at auction. The piece deserved it.

The phone bidder wasn’t broke yet, though. He (she?) next paid \$32,500 plus the 15% for the exceptionally attractive silver Isaac Hull medal, but could not manage to win one of the highlights of the sale (and your author’s personal favorite): a gem silver Thomas MacDonough medal for the same battle on Lake Champlain, neatly housed in a contemporary custom-made ivory case that resembled a watch casing. The whole object was a thing of great beauty, and the medal was a gorgeous enough Proof that even a Washington quarter enthusiast would sit up and take note. It opened for \$10,000 and sold to a scholar in the field for \$40,000 – a lot of money for a medal, perhaps, but seemingly cheap for such a unique piece of Americana. The “duplicate” MacDonough in silver, representing another quarter of the known population, sold for half the price. A once-mounted Oliver Hazard Perry medal in silver was a charmer despite its condition – the piece had clearly been worn and displayed with pride. Though it lacked condition, it still made \$19,000, selling to the same bidder who bought the remarkable engraved and gilt Charles Stewart *Constitution vs. Levant and Cyane* medal that had been awarded to the ship’s surgeon. Selling for \$18,000, it bested an admittedly prettier but less interesting Stewart duplicate by \$1,000. And thus ended the best selection of silver U.S. naval medals ever sold at public auction.

Some interesting and inexpensive American historical medals followed, commemorating the 1814 Treaty of Paris, the 1829 arbitration of a Maine-New Brunswick border dispute, and repayment of damages to the U.S. during the era of Napoleon. Wise bidders snapped up these underappreciated rarities, and one MCA member that shares Mr.

Ford's knack for the underappreciated snapped up a representative sampling of each.

Mr. Ford's duplicate Washington CCAUS medal was inferior to the piece that brought strong money with the Ford Washingtoniana and brought "only" \$17,000. The unique gold medal from the 1876 Centennial, the sort of thing that the neighborhood jeweler would undoubtedly throw on the scale, was better appreciated by this sophisticated crowd and brought an impressive \$47,500.

Speaking of sophisticated and impressive, how about a hoard of soft metal clichés (or "épreuves" if you want to be Jeffersonian, "splasers" if you want to be less French) of the 1792 Diplomatic Medal? Each was pedigreed to Wayte Raymond and "an old safe deposit box" – where were we when that unclaimed property sale went down? Anyway, these unique impressions can likely be traced to the hand of Dupre and can easily be imagined into Jefferson's appreciative grasp too. I was honored to purchase the first one for a friend at just under \$10,000, besting two other friends in the process. The second cliché was still in its once-gilt contemporary frame and sold for \$6,000, while I fought for the third one on behalf of a client until I, sadly, topped a well-respected medal dealer and scholar's bid at \$14,000. The same gentleman won a fine cliché of the "reverse," also known as the obverse, at \$9,500 and the "obverse," also known as the reverse, at \$5,500. He was kind enough to let me know after the sale that he believed, based on his own research, that the "4 juillet 1776" written on the back of his new purchase was perhaps from Dupre's own hand – better than a Mickey Mantle autograph any day! The struck Diplomatic Medal, with its incredibly deep threaded suspension-loop hole, sold for a very reasonable \$32,500 despite some light scratches. To my mind, it ranks at the top of any list of important American historical

medals, though my fondness for a large size Jefferson Peace medal is well known.

Other interesting Mint medals followed, including a rare silver Japanese Embassy medal and a pair of silver Adam Eckfeldt medals. Another cased silver Eckfeldt, long in the Mint Cabinet founded by the aforementioned, resides today in the Smithsonian. A foursome of scarce Alexander Hamilton medals by Furst was inexpensive, each selling for under \$1000 a piece.

A phone bidder purchased the gold Charles Carroll of Carrollton medal for \$30,000, perhaps to repatriate it to its Maryland home, and the four (yes, 4) silver pieces each sold in the \$3,000 to \$7,500 range, seemingly cheap compared to the \$1,000 to \$2,200 price for the copper pieces that followed. The fascinating Edwards counterfeit, the object of Robert Lindesmith's research study that was published by TAMS in 1971, brought \$1,200 to the book.

Some medals I had actually seen before offered a chance for a much-needed restroom break and a chance to call a successful commission bidder, but I was able to return for the majestic selection of lifesaving medals. A well-known California specialist in rare gold medals fought and fought until he owned the amazing 1861 gold Leutze medal for \$37,500. It surely ranks as one of the highlights of this sale, and weighing its heft in hand is a special treat. A crudely holed silver LS-2 was purchased by a different California specialist in lifesaving medals, and he was interested enough to purchase the 1898 LS-3 in lot 262 as well. The following piece sold to a dealer at a nearly identical bid, \$3,250, and the same amount of money would have won any of the other LS-3s as well.

And now we wait patiently for January, featuring an incredibly diverse group of

military medals spanning a wide swath of U.S. history. Mike Hodder somehow finds time to sleep amidst all this work, while the expectation of his next completed work keeps some of us up at night. We'll see many of you in 2005.